

One Hundred Years Ago, On February 10, 1840,
Abraham Lincoln Was In Attendance At A Whig
"Festival" In Peoria.



Abraham Lincoln
At Peoria.

Lincoln Nat'l Life Foundation
Fort Wayne
Indiana

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ing In Peoria. S It Was The
First Important Rally Of The
Campaign. S S S S S



EVERY town of any respectable size planned to hold at least one Whig celebration during the presidential campaign of 1840. The first large celebration of the campaign in Illinois was held at Peoria, on February 10th. At such affairs, party leaders from the neighboring towns and settlements made it a point to present themselves and self-appointed delegations went along just for the fun of it. From the significance of the campaign or the characteristics of the candidates, certain symbols were formed and used for all they were worth. Since this was the "Hard Cider Campaign" with Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe the candidate, a log cabin with a barrel of free running hard cider on the outside, was the most conspicuous symbol of the campaign. From the word "Tippecanoe," a canoe also came to be a campaign symbol.

At the Peoria Festival, the McLean County delegation put in their appearance with such a craft. "The McLean delegation, numbering thirty-nine in all, left Bloomington on Saturday morning (8th) in three wagons and one CANOE, each drawn by four splendid horses, suitably decorated with flags and other ornaments. The canoe was mounted on the running gear of a wagon, and was a real black walnut 'dug out,' 20 feet long, about three feet wide, and a beautiful piece of work. On one side was the inscription in gold, "After so many shipwrecks a harbor appears;" on the other, "A long pull, a strong pull and a pull together;" and on the other side of the bow and stern, "Tippecanoe." It contained four seats on which two men sat abreast, with single seats at each end, and an elevated one in front for the driver. The foremost seat was occupied by . . . a soldier of Gen. Washington's army."

The McLean delegation stole the show at Peoria that day. They had been received at Tremont, half-way between Bloomington and Peoria, on the evening of the 8th and here they were wined and dined in the truest Rotarian style of the day. Thirteen toasts were given and these were responded to by

a grand total of ninety-three cheers according to the accounts given in a contemporary Peoria newspaper. The last toast was the only non-political one and even this carried a tinge of campaign parlance. It was delivered to, "Woman—Her smiles the only despotism recognized by freemen."

The McLean delegation arrived in Peoria about 10 o'clock, on the morning of the 10th, having crossed the river under a cannon salute. They were escorted to the Clinton House from where the line of march proceeded to the Court House where speech-making began.

After the speeches at the Court House, the assemblage returned to the Clinton House "where all who could, sat down to a most sumptuous table. The dinner was attended, as usual, by patriotic toasts and speeches. Among the speeches were—one from Dr. Henry, of Bloomington; one from A. Lincoln, Esq.; one from J. W. Fell, Esq.; and others."

Lincoln's membership on the State Central Committee demanded that he attend as many such celebrations as possible. In addition to his activities in Central Illinois, his travels during the year, in the interests of the Whig party, carried him into the American Bottom, the southern part of the state known as Egypt and once into his native state of Kentucky. His efforts were untiring in promoting the interests of his party on every possible occasion.

The Clinton House at Peoria, where the dinner took place, was one of the best hotels in town. It was destroyed by fire in 1854. Peoria Court House, where the speeches were delivered, was a place that Lincoln was to know well in years to come. Here he often jostled politically with Democratic opponents, and here too his legal prowess was tested in an occasional court case.

THEODORE S. CHARRNEY.

The cachet symbolic of this event is a representative picture of Abraham Lincoln in the course of his speech at the Clinton House in Peoria. Prepared by THE POOR RICHARD PRESS, 5053 Montana Street, Chicago, Illinois.

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